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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

38th meeting
Strasbourg, 27-30 November 2018

Other complaints

**Alleged negative impacts to Lake Ohrid and
Galichica National Park candidate Emerald
Sites due to infrastructure developments
("the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia")**

- COMPLAINT FORM -

*Document prepared by
the Environment Citizens Association "Front 21/42", "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"*

**Convention on the Conservation of
European Wildlife
and Natural Habitats**



COMPLAINT FORM

NB: Complaint forms must be submitted in electronic word format, and not exceed 3 pages, including the first administrative page. A maximum 5-page report can be attached. The Secretariat will request additional information on a case-by-case basis.

Please, fill in this form and send it to the attention of:

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Electronic Signature

1. Please state the reason of your complaint (refer also the Contracting Party/es involved and the Articles of the Convention which might be violated).

We are concerned that the planned massive infrastructure development within the territory of Galichica National Park and Lake Ohrid shore in Macedonia will cause irreversible damage to the flora and fauna in the National park and lake. Plans includes: ski center and resort, Expressway A3, Marina, and several touristic development zones– including drying of the last remaining marsh “Studenchishte” for the construction of an elite settlement.

We believe that Republic of Macedonia violates Article 2, Article 3 paragraph 2, Article 4 and Article 6 and Article 7 of the Bern Convention.

2. Which are the specific specie/s or habitat/s included in one of the Appendices of the Bern Convention potentially affected? (Please include here information about the geographical area and the population of the species concerned, if applicable)

Located in the Dinaric Alps on the border between R. Macedonia and R. Albania, with estimated age of around 4 million years, Lake Ohrid is the oldest natural lake in Europe and one of the oldest lakes in the world. With over 200 endemic species harboured in its waters, it is the most important lentic ecosystem on the European continent. Lake Ohrid is also an Important Bird Area with 20000-40000 wintering waterfowls.

Proposed projects on the Lake Ohrid will affect 80 species from the Bern Convention Appendices (out of which 42 on Appendix II and 38 on Appendix III).

Above the valley of Lake Ohrid rises Mount Galichica in National Park “Galichica” – recognized by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and protected by law since 1958. Galichica has been internationally recognised as an Important Plant Area and Prime Butterfly Area (the park includes 5.330 different types of plants and animals, 114 of which are endemic). Proposed infrastructure projects might potentially affect estimated 229 species from the Bern Convention Appendices (195 on Appendix II and 34 on Appendix III)

Combined, proposed projects might potentially affect estimated 266 species from the Bern Convention Appendices (out of which 208 on Appendix II and 58 on Appendix III).

A detailed overview of all species found in Galichica National Park and Lake Ohrid, included in the Appendices of the Bern Convention are attached with this complaint.

3. What might be the negative effects for the specie/s or habitat/s involved?

Three main negative effects will occur from implementation of the development project (confirmed with SEA reports conducted for some of the planned projects and plans including Amendments of the Management plan for Galichica National park): habitat and species loss, fragmentation and disturbance.

Direct habitat destruction due to construction activities, will destroy ca 140 ha of the Annex I habitat type “! 41.7 Thermophilous and supra-Mediterranean oak woods”, ca 87 ha of habitat type “! 41.1 Beech forests”, unquantified (in the available documentation) percentage of habitat type “! 41.8 Mixed thermophilous forests” and possibly several other Annex I habitat types. The habitat loss in Galichica NP will affect a number of Annex II species, especially among mammals (Brown Bear - *Ursus arctos*, Wild Cat - *Felis silvestris*, and several forest-dwelling bat species), birds (many forest specialists, including several species of woodpeckers, owls and many passerines) and reptiles (especially the Herman’s Tortoise *Testudo hermanni*, several whip snakes, the Horn-nosed Viper *Vipera ammodytes* and a number of lizard species). At Lake Ohrid, shoreline habitats and reed beds will be mostly affected (exact coverage still unknown, but 100% obliteration of the last marsh, the Studenchishte Marsh, is planned). The most affected Annex II species will be The Pygmy Cormorant (*Microcarbo pygmeus*) and the Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*), but the list includes several reed warbler

species and other passerines, herons, ibises and few waterfowl species, and also the Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*). Disturbance is expected as a secondary effect of both construction and operational phases of the projects, especially in Galichica NP. Large mammals will be the most affected group. Although there is no quantification neither of the total reproductive populations of Annex II species at Lake Ohrid or at Galichica NP, nor quantification of the affected part of the populations of each of the priority species in neither the draft Amendments of Management plan nor the SEA, population declines will be the most probable outcome. No population estimates of Annex I habitat types or Annex II species are available in the project documentation and background documents so far. Consequently, no projections have been done how those reductions, and induced changes in the demography rates (e.g, increased mortality, increased emigration), will affect the viability of the local populations and the overall health and functionality of the ecosystems.

4. Do you know if potentially affected species or habitats also fall under the scope of other international Conventions, (for instance: RAMSAR, CMS, ACCOBAMS, Barcelona Convention, etc) or if the area has been identified as a NATURA 2000/Emerald network site?

Lake Ohrid and Galichica National Park are officially nominated as Emerald Sites from Macedonia (codes MK0000001 – Galichica and MK0000024 – Ohridsko Ezero.

From the list of species included in the annexes of the Bern convention, 3 species are also listed on the Appendix I and 121 other species listed on the on Appendix II from the CMS Convention (Bonn Convention).

As many as 49 of them are included in the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA), ratified by Macedonia in 1999.

In 1979, Lake Ohrid and the City of Ohrid were declared as World Natural and Cultural Heritage site, protected by UNESCO “Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region”. Because of the extraordinary biodiversity and the international significance, in 2014 Galichica National Park and Lake Ohrid became part of the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves “Ohrid-Prespa”. Proposed infrastructure projects will likely have impact on the outstanding universal values (OUV) of the site.

5. Do you know if there are any pending procedures at the national or international level regarding the object of your complaint?

Ongoing processes on international level: At the 40th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Istanbul the Committee adopted Decision (No. 40 COM 7B.68) *noting in paragraph 4: “with concern that a number of large-scale infrastructure projects have been proposed within the property and that the conclusions of the impact assessments of the proposed Galichica Ski Centre, the A3 road, the Railway corridor VIII and Highway A2 demonstrate that these projects would be likely to cause significant potential impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, and considers that these projects appear to represent a potential danger to the property, in line with paragraphs 179 and 180 of the Operational Guidelines”.*

Additionally the Committee in paragraph 9 of the Decision further requests “*the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2017, a report on the state of conservation of the property and on the steps taken to implement the above recommendations, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 41st session in 2017, with a view to considering, in the case of confirmation of the ascertained or potential danger to OUV, the possible inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger*”.

Ongoing processes on national level: Preparatory activities towards implementation of the projects have started. Various plans necessary for the implementation of the projects are at different stages of amendments/adoption:

1. Amendments of The Management Plan for Galichica National Park (enables the Ski resort, the expressway and three Touristic Development Zones) is in the final stage of adoption by the Management Board of Galichicha National park. Regarding the project A3 expressway pending loan for National Roads programme includes A3 expressway and detailed project design is underway; 2. The General Spatial Plan for Ohrid that enables urbanization of the Studencishte marsh is adopted by the Municipality of Ohrid and construction work (a 12m wide pedestrian street) has already begun; 3. Six Urban Development Plans enabling concrete platforms in the lake upon which several Touristic Development Zones and at least one petrol station are to be built - three plans are already adopted (Marina, St. Stefan and Daljan); three are in final stage of adoption (Lagadin, Gradishte and Trpejca).

6. Any other information (existence of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), size of projects, maps of the area, etc)

Decision of Government to implement the projects in Galicica NP, (without consultation with stakeholders) MKD language: ([LINK](#))

Amendments of the Management plan of Galicica NP- final draft, which accommodates part of the the planned projects on MKD language ([LINK](#)) and final draft of SEA for the Amendments of the MP on ENG language ([LINK](#))

Strategic Environmental Assessment for the General urban plan of Ohrid on MKD language ([LINK](#))

Map of the area concerned and planned projects ([LINK](#)) and Fact sheet ([LINK](#))

UNESCO World Heritage Committee Decision ([No. 40 COM 7B.68](#))

EBRD PSD National Roads Programme [LINK](#)